

REMARKS

The Examiner is thanked for the performance of a through search for considering the references submitted in the Information Disclosure Statement filed on August 14, 2006.

Claims 1, 10, 24-29, 31-33, 35, 38, and 40-43 are amended herein. Claim 23 is canceled. No claims are added. Hence, Claims 1-18, 24-33, 35, 37-38, and 40-43 are pending in the present application.

Each issue raised in the Office Action mailed September 5, 2006 is addressed hereinafter.

I. ISSUES NOT RELATING TO PRIOR ART

Claim 23, and the dependent claims thereof, were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, for lack of antecedent basis for the phrase “the computer-implemented steps” which appeared in Claim 23.

The subject matter of Claim 23 has been incorporated in allowed Claim 35, and the alleged lack of antecedent basis issue has been addressed in the amendment to Claim 35.

II. ISSUES RELATING TO PRIOR ART

A. INDEPENDENT CLAIM 35

The Office Action indicated that Claim 35 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112 and to include all features of the independent base claim and any intervening claims.

Claim 35 has been rewritten in independent form to incorporate all features of the now canceled Claim 23, which is the sole claim from which Claim 35 previously depended. Further, the amendment to Claim 35 has addressed the rejection under 35 U.S.C § 112 that

was previously issued against Claim 23. For these reasons, Claim 35 is believed to be in condition for allowance.

B. INDEPENDENT CLAIMS 1 AND 10

Claims 1 and 10 were rejected as allegedly unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Hoffman et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,094,435 ("HOFFMAN") in view of Carvey et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,359,879 ("CARVEY").

Claims 1 and 10 have been amended herein to include features similar to the features of allowed Claim 35. Thus, Claims 1 and 10 are patentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over HOFFMAN in view of CARVEY for at least the reasons for which Claim 35 is allowable. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of Claims 1 and 10 is respectfully requested.

C. DEPENDENT CLAIMS 24-33, 37-38, AND 40-43

Claims 25-29, 31-33, 37-38 and 40-43 were rejected as allegedly anticipated under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) by HOFFMAN. Claim 24 was rejected as allegedly unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over HOFFMAN in view of CARVEY. Claim 30 was rejected as allegedly unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over HOFFMAN in view of KERR et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,513,108 ("KERR").

As amended herein, each of Claims 24-33, 37-38, and 40-43 depends from allowable Claim 35, and thus includes each and every feature of the independent base claim. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that Claims 24-33, 37-38, and 40-43 are allowable for at least the reasons for which Claim 35 is allowable. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of Claims 24-33, 37-38, and 40-43 is respectfully requested.

Claims 2-3, 7-9, and 11-16 were rejected as allegedly unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over HOFFMAN in view of CARVEY. Claims 4-6 and 17-18 were rejected as allegedly unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over HOFFMAN in view of CARVEY, and further in view of Freitag, Jr., U.S. Patent No. 6,237,054 ("FREITAG").

Each of Claims 2-9 and 11-18 depends from one of independent Claims 1 and 10, and thus includes each and every feature of the independent base claim. In addition, each of Claims 2-9 and 11-18 introduces one or more additional features that independently render it patentable. However, due to the fundamental differences already identified, to expedite the positive resolution of this case a separate discussion of those features is not included at this time. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that Claims 2-9 and 11-18 are allowable for the reasons given above with respect to Claims 1 and 10. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of Claims 2-9 and 11-18 is respectfully requested.

III. CONCLUSION

The Applicants believe that all issues raised in the Office Action have been addressed. Further, for the reasons set forth above, the Applicants respectfully submit that allowance of the pending claims is appropriate.

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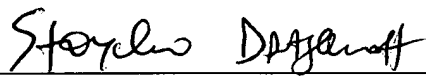
The Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is believed that such contact would further the examination of the present application.

A petition for extension of time, to the extent necessary to make this reply timely filed, is hereby made. If applicable, a law firm check for the petition for extension of time fee is enclosed herewith. If any applicable fee is missing or insufficient, throughout the pendency of this application, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any applicable fees and to credit any overpayments to our Deposit Account No. 50-1302.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: December 4, 2006


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